

Suicide a growing problem

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WITH the launching of the suicide awareness month, Malaysia has now recognized that suicide is here to stay.

Recent instances involving cases of youth taking their own lives confirm that this problem must be quickly tackled.

A 1999 study of the pattern of suicides by the Kuala Lumpur Hospital shows some pattern, with the suicide rate among the Indians the highest (21.1 per 100,000).

Among the Chinese it was 8.6 per 100,000 among the elderly Chinese; whereas among Malays it is 2.6 per 100,000, higher than what was cited in previous studies.

Overall, the suicide rate for Kuala Lumpur is estimated at 7.4 per 100,000. This may have increased now.

Some of the common methods of suicide are poisoning, hanging and jumping off from heights. Among those prone to suicide are those who suffer from mental illness.

According to the Malaysian Psychiatric Association, this involved between 10 and 15 per cent of Malaysia's population, ranging from illnesses such as depression to anxiety disorders and substance addiction.

The World Health Organisation's projection for 2005 based on the Global Burden Study revealed that depression would be the second largest cause of disability after cardiovascular diseases.

Among the obstacles faced in handling the problem is the difficulty of "knowing" whether one is having suicide tendencies.

Another significant factor is the level of stress exerted by society, be it in the form of discrimination or ostracism against those labeled as "crazy" or *tiga-suku*.

Otherwise, it is due to the rising (and unrealistic) placed on the young. This is reported in many countries, the latest of which is in Shanghai, China, where a quarter of all children reportedly have considered committing suicide, according to a study published last week.

According to the director of Beijing Mental Health Care Institute, most parents expect far too much from their children. In fact, psychologists cite heavy schoolwork, intense societal competition, the fast pace of life and conflicts between old and new ideas as some of the causes. And Malaysia is well in this league.

One website has this to say about suicide: "Suicide is not chosen; it happens when pain exceeds resources for coping with pain" (<http://www.metanoia.org/suicide/>).

You can survive suicidal feelings if you do either of these two things: find a way to reduce your pain, or find a way to increase your coping resources. Both are possible provided one has a well-balanced self-esteem to empower oneself towards a healthy attitude to life.

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